Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009

Message Text

SECRET

PAGE 01 BONN 15028 01 OF 02 131805Z
ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 /026 W
----------079142 131808Z /47
O R 131748Z SEP 77
FM AMEMBASSY BONN
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 1384
INFO USMISSION NATO
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY PARIS

S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 BONN 15028

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MILITARY ADDRESSESS HANDLE AS SPECAT EXCLUSIVE

DEPARTMENT PLEASE PASS WHITE HOUSE, SECDEF FOR ISA,
USNMR SHAPE, CINCEUR VAIHINGEN

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PGOV MNUC GW
SUBJECT: US-FRG CONSULTATIONS ON ENHANCED
RADIATION (ER) WEAPONS

REF: NATO 8724 (NOTAL)

SUMMARY: US DELEGATION HEADED BY ASD/ISA MCGIFFERT MET WITH FRG DELEGATION HEADED BY BGEN ALTENBURG SEPTEMBER 12 FOR ABOUT TWO HOURS TO DISCUSS US DECISION WHETHER OR NOT TO PRODUCE AND DEPLOY ER WEAPONS. US STRESSED THAT NO DECISION HAD BEEN MADE AND THAT CENTRAL PURPOSE OF CONSULTATIONS WAS TO BEGIN TO ELICIT FRG VIEWS, WHICH WOULD WEIGH HEAVILY IN US DECISION. FRG GAVE NO DEFINITIVE POSITION BUT REVEALED MUCH REGARDING THEIR SUBSTANTIVE DISPOSITION AND THEIR PREFERENCES FOR POLITICAL/PUBLIC HANDLING. FOLLOWING IS ESSENCE OF
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PAGE 02 BONN 15028 01 OF 02 131805Z

CONSULTATION BY TOPIC. END SUMMARY.

1. FRG POSITION: GERMANS STRESSED THAT CHANCELLOR HAD TAKEN NO POSITION ON ER WEAPONS BUT THAT BUNDESTAG DEBATE HAD GONE WELL AND HELPED DE-EMOTIONALIZE THE DEBATE. THEY FOCUSED THEIR QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS PRIMARILY ON THE CONTINGENCY OF A POSITIVE US DECISION, HINTING THAT

Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009

Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009

THAT IS WHERE THEY ARE COMING OUT AND THAT IS WHAT THEY ARE PREPARING FOR. GERMANS ALSO MADE POSITIVE COMMENTS ABOUT THE VALUE OF ER WEAPONS, WHILE MERELY RAISING A FEW STANDARD QUESTIONS ABOUT CONTROVERSIAL ASPECTS (E.G., EFFECT ON NUCLEAR THRESHOLD AND ARMS CONTROL NEGOTIATIONS). CHANCELLOR WILL WRITE PRESIDENT SHORTLY; CONTENT OF LETTER NOT DISCUSSED.

2. SOURCE OF CONTROVERSY: GERMANS HAMMERED THE POINT THAT THE CONTROVERSY AROSE FROM US PRESS STORIES, AND THAT IF EARLY FRG GOVERNMENT STATEMENTS WERE NOT VERY HELPFUL IT WAS BECAUSE THEY WERE CAUGHT UNPREPARED AND CONFUSED ABOUT THE MEANING OF "NEUTRON BOMB."

3. ALLIANCE-WIDE RESPONSIBILITY: GERMANS UNDERSTAND THAT PRODUCTION WAS A US DECISION AND THAT FRG VIEWS ON DEPLOYMENT WOULD FIGURE IMPORTANTLY IN THIS DECISION. AT THE SAME TIME, FRG DOES NOT WANT TO BEAR FULL PUBLIC BURDEN IF DECISION IS MADE TO PROCEED WITH ER PRODUCTION/DEPLOYMENT. FRG WANTS USG TO DO ITS BEST TO ENSURE AS MANY OTHERS AS POSSIBLE WILL SUPPORT -- OR AT LEAST CONTAIN THEIR OPPOSITION TO -- WHATEVER US DECIDES. FRG PARTICULARLY PLEASED US WAS CONDUCTING MULTILATERAL CONSULTATIONS ON SEPTEMBER 13 AND MENTIONED POSSIBILITY OF USING BARI NPG MINISTERIAL TO CULMINATE CONSULTATION PROCESS.

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4. THE DUTCH POSITION: GERMANS ARE PREOCCUPIED WITH DANGER THAT DUTCH WILL CAUSE PUBLIC TROUBLE IF US DECIDES TO GO AHEAD. THEY STRESSED NEED TO AVOID SITUATION IN WHICH IT WAS SEEN THAT OTHERS (READ DUTCH) CAN AVOID THE "RISKS" INVOLVED IN MAINTAINING DETERRENCE BY OPPOSING ER AND/OR OTHER TNF.

5. PUBLIC SUPPORT: US DELEGATION SAID US WOULD EXPECT PUBLIC SUPPORT FROM FRG, WHATEVER THE PRESIDENT'S DECISION. GERMANS COULD GIVE NO GUARANTEE, BUT INDICATED THAT A CONVERGENCE OF US AND FRG VIEWS SHOULD MAKE PUBLIC SUPPORT NATURAL, PROVIDED FRG HAS ENOUGH COMPANY FROM AMONG OTHER ALLIES. IF DECISION GOES AGAINST PRODUCTION, FRG SUPPORT WOULD BE MORE MUTED SINCE POLITICAL PROBLEM FOR BONN IN THAT CASE WOULD COME FROM SILENT MAJORITY RATHER THAN VOCAL MINORITY.

6. TIMING: GERMANS DO NOT WANT ISSUE TO DRAG ON AS A

Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009

Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009

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PAGE 01 BONN 15028 02 OF 02 131758Z
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FM AMEMBASSY BONN
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 1385
INFO USMISSION NATO
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S E C R E T SECTION 02 OF 02 BONN 15028

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SOURCE OF DOMESTIC CONTROVERSY, BUT SAID THEY WOULD NEED SOME TIME TO GET THEIR OWN POLITICAL PARTIES FULLY ON BOARD BEFORE ANY ANNOUNCEMENT ON ER PRODUCTION IS MADE. THEY DID NOT REACT NEGATIVELY TO US SUGGESTION THAT VIEWS ON DEPLOYMENT BE REGISTERED VERY SOON, IN ANY CASE NOT LATER THAN BARI NPG.

7. ARMS CONTROL CONSIDERATIONS: GERMANS AGREE THERE ARE NO DIRECT CONNECTIONS BETWEEN ER PRODUCTION/ DEPLOYMENT AND ONGOING ARMS CONTROL. MODEST CONCERN OVER EFFECT ON CLIMATE FOR SALT AND "DETENTE" WAS EVIDENT. GERMANS MENTIONED UTILITY IN USING ARMS CONTROL BARGAINING CHIP ARGUMENT TO HELP GAIN LIBERAL SUPPORT IN FRG IF DECISION IS MADE TO GO AHEAD WITH ER.

8. RELATIONSHIP TO NATO STRATEGY AND TRIAD: WHILE NOT MENTIONING EVANS AND NOVAK, GERMANS MADE CLEAR THAT THEY COULD NOT ACCEPT ER AS SUBSTITUTE FOR OR DISTRACTION FROM FORWARD DEFENSE (AND CONVENTIONAL FORCE IMPROVEMENTS). WHILE NOT MENTIONING GLCM, GERMANS ALSO MADE CLEAR THAT IMPROVEMENT ACROSS FULL SPECTRUM OF TNF POSTURE WAS NECESSARY, LEST ER, IF PRODUCED/DEPLOYED, SUGGEST
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PAGE 02 BONN 15028 02 OF 02 131758Z

Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009

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Message Attributes

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Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
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